

Northeast Temperate Inventory and Monitoring Network Technical Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

18 -19 November 2003, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP, Woodstock, Vermont

Attendees (official committee members in **bold**):

Greg Shriver

Fred Dieffenbach

Sheila Colwell

Sam Droege

Mary Foley

Beth Johnson

Betsy Lyman

Brian McDonnell

Christina Marts

Matt Marshall

Charles Roman

David Manski

Wayne Millington

David Hayes

Tonnie Maniero

Theresa Moore

18 November 2003

Introductions and role of the Technical Steering Committee

Greg Shriver gave a quick over view of the I&M program and the Northeast Temperate Network. The roles and responsibilities of the membership as well as membership logistics were then discussed.

Greg asked if committee membership should be staggered through the park resource managers so the committee doesn't become too big yet provides all the parks an opportunity to participate. There is a need to maintain park people on the committee for input and part of the development of the program so the parks will be kept informed as to the plans of the I&M Program. As for rotating people in we could do it in 5 year terms. Once the planning phase is finished (through Phase III) the committee can have rotating membership. The duration of a committee membership will be written into the charter. Should we have just Park Service or bring in outside (Forest Service) people as well? The different disciplines of the members should be looked at to get a diverse group.

The committee decided that the present membership should remain for the duration of monitoring program development (e.g. after the monitoring plan has been approved = completion of Phase 3)

Greg suggested that a primary role of the Committee should be to provide programmatic review.

Mary Foley asked why the committee is composed of only federal employees.

There are federal regulations that limit the role of non-federal participants in the decision making process. They cannot come up with a consensus opinion, but can give ideas and then these can be incorporated within the final decision given to parks by the committee.

Acadia Forest Monitoring Workshop

There were many discussions related to the idea to work with Chris Eager on a combined forest monitoring and air quality related workshop to develop the indicators that would go into USFS forest plans and be standardized within the northeast. A UMaine and Acadia a partnership to develop a forest monitoring program for Acadia was discussed. Due to timing constraints related to the cooperative agreement UMaine can no longer conduct the workshop and the plan is to have SUNY-ESF step in and take their place, incorporating this proposal into the overall network planning strategy.

Because it was unclear where Chris Eager stood with his idea for the broader forest monitoring workshop, and our need to focus on selecting vital signs for the Network, it was decided that we would contact Chris Eager to update him on our progress but plan to maintain focus on the selection of vital signs for parks.

Strategy for selecting Vital Signs

A primary focus of this meeting was to define the strategy for selecting indicators or vital signs for the parks and network. Many ideas and sceneries were discussed and considered including the following;

Indicators will be selected from priority park issues. We will generate a park-based conceptual model and take the list of indicators to parks for selection. This park priority list would then be sent to tech steering comm. for review. Justification for selected and non-selected indicators selected must be recorded. Scientific community backing up why certain indicators have been picked will help in the justification.

Despite the indicators chosen the program manager (network coordinator) knows how much money a park has and what can be implemented.

The writing of the chapters for Phase 2 will be done by cooperators and NETN staff, and committee members will give review of these reports.

We should establish topical work groups to deal with issues (water and wetlands or forest monitoring for example). The topical groups formed will deal with issues and will be made up of USGS, SUNY, NETN, and, academics and will work with the indicators that have been chosen for the parks.

NETN could develop topics (which will be broad based) here that will be given to smaller committees. They could check in with parks and parks can be invited to the meetings. When identifying indicators have people who are knowledgeable about these issues which can be done by bringing in outside sources and using the information the parks have already identified. Once the topical group has developed a plan it can be presented to a park and they can be involved in this way.

I&M cannot do everything, so all issues for all parks may not be able to be addressed.

Monitoring will be broad based to cover all parks. If a park is concerned about a specific problem they can use the monitoring program as a base to study their specific problem. A conceptual model can be used to develop indicators to be used by the topic focus groups. Each park will have a park-based conceptual model.

Developing a conceptual model will prioritize indicators. These models will help the topical committees. Focus groups will also be used to make these models. Once presented to the parks these models help select indicators.

Topical groups would be: FORESTS (invasive plant and insect specialist), LANDSCAPE CHANGE, WATER AND WETLANDS QUALITY, Heaths and bogs, inter-tidal...possible other topics, or perhaps divide up by species (mammals, birds), abiotic, etc.. Topical groups would be equal to or less than 10 people. NETN (Greg) will tell these topical committees exactly what is wanted.

After much discussion and consideration it was decided that Greg would take some time before 8:30 am on 19 November 2003 to develop some strategies for how the vital signs selection process would be implemented and the committee would agree (by consensus) to formalize and select the strategy before the end of Wednesdays (19 November 2003) meeting.

19 November 2003

Strategy for selecting Vital Signs (continued)

Greg presented 3 strategies for how to select Vital Signs (developed with help from Matt Marshall over coffee and eggs)

Strategy 1: Park-Focus Group-Technical Committee

- Decisions made by consensus
- Step 1: Park-by-park meetings held with core team (=SUNY-ESF, USGS, NETN)
 - Present park conceptual models that integrate ecological systems and park priority resource issues and threats.

- Select indicators with park staff and core team
 - Document why specific indicators were not selected
- Step 2: Hold a workshop to review and select indicators
 - Workgroups review indicators selected by parks and core team
 - 1 technical steering committee member responsible for identifying subject matter experts (3-5) to participate in review
 - workshop attendees include;
 - SUNY-USGS-NETN
 - park staff
 - Core team summarizes results of park based and workshop indicator selection processes (draft of Chapter 3 for NETN monitoring plan)
- Step 3: Technical steering committee reviews draft chapter
 - Responsible for soliciting reviews from other subject matter experts

Strategy 2: Focus Group-Technical Committee

- Decisions made by consensus
- Step 1: Hold a workshop to review and select indicators
 - Core team develops park based conceptual models and lists of indicators for each workgroup
 - workgroups meet at breakout sessions to select indicators
 - workshop attendees include;
 - subject matter experts
 - core team
 - park staff
 - Core team summarizes results and workshop indicator selection processes (draft of Chapter 3 for NETN monitoring plan)
- Step 2: Technical steering committee reviews draft chapter
 - Responsible for soliciting reviews from other subject matter experts
- Step 3: Re-convene network parks to present selected vital signs
 - make necessary adjustments based on park input
 - workshop attendees include;
 - park staff
 - core team
 - tech. steering committee
 - board of directors

Strategy 3: Strawman - Delphi

- Decisions made by ranking and scoring lists of indicators
- Step 1: Core team develops database of indicators
 - Database sent to wide audience
 - Parks, subject matter experts, tech. comm., NETN
 - Participants score indicators based on mgt. sig., ecological sig. and legal/policy mandates
 - NETN summarizes ranks to identify priorities based on highest scoring indicators
- Step 2: Technical steering committee reviews ranked indicators

- Incorporates feasibility, cost, and measurability into selection criteria
- Indicators re-scored
- Step 3: Core team drafts Chapter 3.

The Technical committee thought that park-by-park meetings with the core team would take too long and would not advance the selection of vital signs for the network. The committee did not like the idea of Delphi type scoring procedures and thought that using consensus and subject matter experts was the best approach for vital sign selection.

*The Technical Committee agreed to **Strategy 2** where subject matter work groups would meet for 2-3 days to select indicators for each park. Decisions of these work groups will be made by consensus.*

Establishment of subject matter work groups:

Greg presented draft ideas about subject matter work groups that divided them into;

- 1) Terrestrial
 - Forests
 - Wetlands
 - Species
- 2) Aquatic
 - Intertidal
 - Water Quality

After discussion, the Technical Steering Committee agreed to the following subject matter work groups:

- 1) Forests
- 2) Wetlands, river, streams
- 3) non-forested (grasslands, shrub-lands, alpine/sub-alpine, rocky summits)
- 4) Coastal (inter-tidal)

Sam Droege recommended that members of each workgroup be selected based on their expertise with different taxonomic groups thereby incorporating the species issues into each workgroup. The same suggestion was made regarding baseline processes (climate, meteorological, atmospheric) and landscape scale / habitat fragmentation issues.

Tonnie Maniero asked how geologic resource issues would be addressed and the group agreed to incorporate these questions into the materials provided to workshop participants but not to create a specific workgroup related to geologic resources.

NETN Vital Signs Selection Workshop logistics:

The Core Team will organize and host a 2-3 day workshop where subject matter experts will be invited to participate in the above workgroups to select vital signs for NETN parks. The technical steering committee agreed to provide list of potential workgroup participants for the workshop.

Materials necessary for this workshop include:

- Draft list of potential indicators
- Park based conceptual model
- Summaries of park issues and natural resource priorities
- Maps of parks
- A template for how workgroup summaries should be submitted
- Criteria for selecting indicators

A presentation should be given by Greg at the beginning of the workshop to provide the context of the meeting, review the goals and objectives, and present a summary of each park with pictures and maps.

A workgroup chair will be identified prior to the workshop and responsible for summarizing the results. This should be facilitated by the SUNY and USGS teams and a member of these teams should be on each workgroup and responsible for summarizing reports.

Templates should be drafted and provided to workgroups prior to the meeting to standardize formatting and reporting among workgroups.

At the end of the workshop the technical steering committee will help provide synthesis of network-wide vital signs.

Re-convening of NETN parks to review Vital Signs Selection Meeting

A second meeting will be held after the NETN Vital Signs Selection Workshop with the primary purpose to review the results of the NETN Vital Signs Selection Workshop and present the findings to park staff.

Potential Workgroup Participants

Forests

Bill Patterson
Brian Underwood?
Don Faber-Langendoen
Chris Eager

Wetlands

Ralph Tiner

Hilary Neckles
Allan Ellsworth
Patricia Rafferty
Peter Paton
Jerry Longcore

Non-forested
Volgelman (UVM)
Patterson
UMO contact??
Chris Eager

Coastal
Susan Rawley
People from NCBN

TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It was agreed that the present groups would remain with the program through Phase 3 of the monitoring program development. After that time we will re-visit the membership to add different expertise and resource managers.

Additional people that may be a necessary addition to the present Tech. Comm. include;

- 1) fresh water hydrologist (Bob Lickfar, Bob Lent, Peter Wissgale)
- 2) forest service representative (???)
- 3) park specialist (Bill Patterson)
- 4) Plant ecologist (Hank Art)
- 5) Ichthyologist

Mary and Beth agreed to investigate the possibility of establishing more academics as Schedule A federal employees like Bill Patterson to expand our ability to incorporate more participants on the committee.

The next meeting scheduled for 16-17 November 2004 and should be hosted at a different park.